

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 186461

62

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SUBJECT: MBFR: AP REPORT

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1. THE FOLLOWING STORY BY ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
FRED HOFFMAN WAS TRANSMITTED BY AP ON AUGUST 6:

2. BEGIN TEXT. U.S. DEFENSE ANALYSTS HOPE THE RECENT
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PAGE 02 STATE 186461

TALKS BETWEEN U.S. AND SOVIET LEADERS MAY HELP BREAK A
22-MONTH DEADLOCK IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER MUTUAL FORCE
REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

THEY ARE LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF PROGRESS WHEN EAST-WEST

DIPLOMATS ENTER THE NEXT ROUND OF THE FORCE REDUCTION TALKS IN VIENNA NEXT MONTH IN THE WAKE OF MEETINGS BETWEEN PRESIDENT FORD AND SOVIET PARTY CHIEF LEONID I. BREZHNEV IN HELSINKI LAST WEEK.

PENTAGON SOURCES SAY WESTERN DIPLOMATS WILL PUSH A PROPOSAL FOR SOME CUTBACKS IN U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN WESTERN EUROPE IN EXCHANGE FOR WITHDRAWAL BY THE RUSSIANS OF A TANK ARMY.

THE WESTERN PROPOSAL REPORTEDLY WOULD INVOLVE A REDUCTION OF SOME 1,000 U.S. TACTICAL NUCLEAR WARHEADS FROM THE 7,000 SAID TO BE IN WESTERN EUROPE, AS WELL AS A CUTBACK IN FIGHTER-BOMBERS AND SHORT-RANGE MISSILES WHICH WOULD DELIVER THEM AGAINST ENEMY TARGETS.

THE UNITED STATES KEEPS NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE TO DETER POSSIBLE SOVIET ATTACK. U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE SAID SUCH WEAPONS WOULD BE USED IF NECESSARY TO PREVENT THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE'S FORCES FROM BEING OVERWHELMED BY SUPERIOR TANK-LED SOVIET ARMIES.

UNDER THE WESTERN PROPOSAL BEING PUT FORWARD, THE RUSSIANS WOULD COMPENSATE FOR A REDUCTION IN U.S. TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE BY REMOVING FROM THE

CENTRAL REGION A FULL ARMY OF 65,000 MEN AND 1,700 TANKS.

ACCORDING TO CURRENT PENTAGON ESTIMATES, THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR WARSAW PACT ALLIES NUMBER ABOUT 960,000 MEN AND MORE THAN 16,000 TANKS IN CENTRAL EUROPE, FACING 777,000 ALLIED TROOPS AND 6,000 TANKS.

THE RIVAL TACTICAL AIR FORCES ARE ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT, WITH ABOUT 2,900 PLANES ON BOTH SIDES, BUT ALLIED PLANES UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 186461

ARE REGARDED AS SUPERIOR FOR NOW.

SOURCES FAMILIAR WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS SAY THE RUSSIANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO CONSIDER A WESTERN PROPOSAL FOR A CEILING OF ABOUT 700,000 MEN ON BOTH SIDES.

THERE IS NO INDICATION WHETHER ALLIED NEGOTIATORS HAVE RAISED THE QUESTION OF TRIMMING THE CONSIDERABLE FORCE OF SOVIET TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS WITHIN RANGE OF WESTERN EUROPE.

SOME CRITICS CONTEND A SOVIET REDUCTION OF FORCES

FACING THE CENTRAL NATO REGION WOULD BE LESS SIGNIFICANT
THAN A U.S. PULLBACK BECAUSE OF THE RELATIVE DISTANCES
INVOLVED.

THEY ARGUE THAT SOVIET STRENGTH COULD BE BUILT UP
AGAIN RAPIDLY AND EASILY FROM WESTERN RUSSIA. BUT THEY
NOTE THAT U.S. REINFORCEMENTS IN A CRISIS WOULD HAVE
TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC, WITH MOST HEAVY EQUIPMENT MOVING
BY SHIP IN THE FACE OF POSSIBLE SOVIET SUBMARINE
OPPOSITION. END TEXT.

3. WE ARE USING THE FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE HERE,
WHICH FOLLOWS THE LINES OF PARA - OF REFTTEL: "THERE ARE
CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS IN NATO ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF
THE MBFR NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS INAPPROPRIATE TO COMMENT
ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF ALLIED CONSULTATIONS OR THE
NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES. IF WE ARE GOING TO MAKE PROGRESS
IN SUCH NEGOTIATIONS, WE HAVE TO RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF
THEM." KISSINGER

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